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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001399

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL SECURITY BUREAU DEPUTY COMMENTS ON IRAQ,
MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, NATO

REF: A. KUWAIT 440

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 873

Classified By: CDA Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) On August 27, Charg paid a courtesy call on Kuwait National Security Bureau (NSB) Deputy Director Shaykh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah. On September 5, NATO Deputy Secretary General Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo also met with

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Shaykh Thamer and later provided a briefing of his meeting to local Heads of Missions and Defense Attaches. The below cable is a readout of the two meetings with a focus on Shaykh Thamer's views on Iraq, extremism and NATO. End summary.

Kuwait's grand plan for the British in Iraq

[1](#)2. (C) On August 27, Charg paid a courtesy call on Kuwait National Security Bureau-NSB (the agency responsible for coordinating state security policy) Deputy Director Shaykh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah. Shaykh Thamer told the Charg of his recent suggestion to the British Embassy in Kuwait that the UK refrain from a total withdrawal from Iraq, and instead leave the airbase in Basra and relocate to an isolated airbase in the desert between Nasriya and Basra. He congratulated himself on this idea, noting that this solution would suit all parties. He reasoned that the British would no longer have to endure mortar and rocket attacks from Basra and would be far enough away into the desert to see the enemy's approach, yet close enough to respond to emergency needs of the city. This solution, according to Shaykh Thamer would test the citizens of Basra and help them to determine the level of independence they are truly ready for.

[1](#)3. (C) To reinforce this idea, Shaykh Thamer said that a civil war in southern Iraq is imminent. He said that 95 percent of the current attacks are against the British, and when the British are longer around to absorb the brunt of the insurgency, the Shi'a groups will turn against each other. He discounted the role of Sunnis in Basra, saying that their population has been reduced from 30 percent during the Saddam era to 11 percent now. He added that it is a foregone conclusion that the Shi'a in Basra no longer look to Baghdad for leadership, but to Teheran. He also said that it is just a matter of time before a mortar or rocket is fired into Kuwait.

¶4. (C) According to Shaykh Thamer, the British response to his proposal to relocate from Basra airbase to the airport in the desert was that this "was the most credible idea heard yet." (Note: Post has no information that indicates that the British showed interest in this plan. It is our assessment that this idea was tabled as an attempt to keep the British in Iraq. The Kuwaitis are highly concerned over implications of Iraqi violence spilling across the border. End note.)

Extremism

¶5. (C) When discussing potential levels of extremism in Kuwait, Shaykh Thamer said that he did not believe terrorists in Kuwait were planning attacks against the United States. He also said that he did not believe that Kuwaiti terrorists would perpetrate attacks in Kuwait. He praised cooperation between U.S. and Kuwaiti officials in the area of terror financing and believes that the GOK effectively monitors substantial financial transactions--amounts more than KD 500 (USD 1,800).

Philosophy on Muslim Brotherhood

¶6. (C) Shaykh Thamer said that the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has undergone a radical change. According to him, prior to 2000, the MB was entirely an Egyptian organization, but after 2000 when the group began receiving Gulf financing, the main leaders and thinkers were no longer Egyptian, but Gulf Arabs. According to him, there are stark differences between Egyptian MB and Kuwaiti MB:

--Egyptian MB members grew up on Hassan Al-Bana's ideology,

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were mostly poor with no resources, but well-educated.
--Gulf and in particular Kuwaiti MB members tend to be very wealthy, but not necessarily well-educated. Shaykh Thamer stressed that the Kuwaiti MB has no military wing or agenda.

¶7. (C) He noted that since 2000, the GOK began training, educating and reindoctrinating Imams in centers which aim to introduce "original Islam." These centers teach that according to the Koran, Jihad was permissible only under the leadership of Caliphs. Since there is no longer a Caliphate, he reasoned there should be no need or call for Jihad.

Shaykh Thamer and NATO

¶8. (C) NATO Deputy Secretary General Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo visited Kuwait to meet with Shaykh Thamer and develop interest in greater GCC cooperation with NATO and to push for the signing of a NATO Transit Agreement to allow transit of NATO forces and personnel through Kuwait. According to Ambassador Minuto-Rizzo, the agreement is "practically finalized" and will likely be signed in an upcoming NATO visit to Kuwait. He also said that his meetings with Shaykh Thamer were very positive. He is looking to expand NATO cooperation with Kuwait by sharing intelligence, providing experts to advise Kuwait on mil/mil activity and have Kuwait participate in NATO education and training. He added that Thamer promised that the GOK would soon appoint an attaché to NATO Brussels.

¶9. (C) Despite his overall positive impressions, Ambassador Minuto-Rizzo also highlighted from his meeting with Thamer that NATO/GCC cooperation will likely remain complicated and difficult. Thamer reiterated to the ambassador Kuwait's reluctance to engage officially with an organization allied with Israel. Minuto-Rizzo then spoke of the difficulties he faced around the region. In Saudi for example, he said that FM Al Saud was in favor of developing the relationship, but that he could never sell NATO to his country. Qatar, on the

other hand was demonstrating the most flexibility in the GCC, and he hoped that Kuwait would also take the lead in putting differences with Israel behind and reaching out to NATO. On this front, however, the Ambassador indicated he had gained little ground.

¶10. BIO Note:

Shaykh Thamer is the son of former Minister of Interior Shaykh Ali Sabah Al-Salem; the nephew of Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah; and the grandson of Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Salem, who ruled Kuwait from 1965-1977. He graduated from Arkansas State University. Shaykh Thamer is generally pro-American though he openly criticizes U.S. policies at times.

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